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ABSTRACT

Over 1,500 community and junior college administrators were sampled in a national study conducted by the Center for the Study of Higher Education to obtain an accurate, comprehensive picture of administrators' educational and employment backgrounds, career goals and aspirations, career paths, and concerns. Study results included the following: (1) the total number of professional positions held by the respondents ranged from 1 to 17; (2) 32.5% had held at least one joint appointment; (3) 55.5% had been the first person to hold a newly created position; (4) most of the respondents had not held their positions for over 5 years; (5) 90.5% were Caucasian, 37.4% were born between 1930 and 1940, and 83.7% were married; (6) the three administrative positions employing the largest number of the 323 women in the sample were head librarians (110), directors of financial aid (55), and academic deans (43); (7) overall, respondents' mothers had achieved a higher level of education than their fathers; (8) 46.6% of the respondents had earned three degrees; (9) 57.6% felt participation in community activities aided career advancement; (10) 50.1% had experienced a mentor relationship; (11) the factor of greatest importance in selecting their current institution was duties of the position, while salary and institution reputation were primary reasons for remaining; (12) 17.5% were considering a job change, and 76.1% would choose to be an administrator again. (LAL)

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Today's Academic Leaders

A National Study of Administrators in Community and Junior Colleges

The Pennsylvania State University
in cooperation with
The American Association of
Community and Junior Colleges

Center for the Study of Higher Education
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The Pennsylvania State University
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JC 850 383

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Today's Academic Leaders

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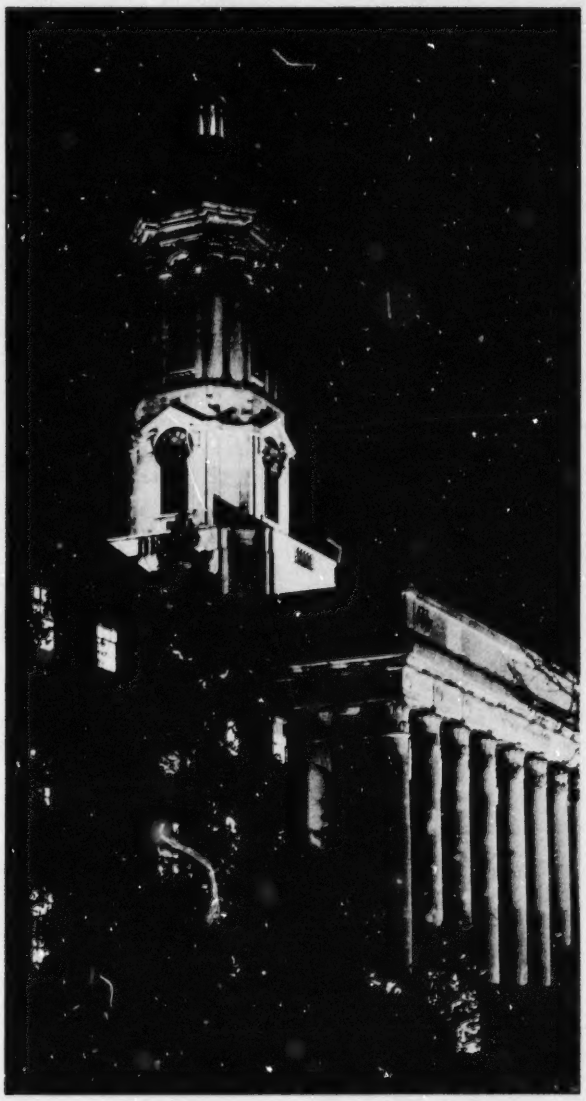


Over 1,500 community and junior college administrators were sampled in a national study conducted at the Center for the Study of Higher Education at The Pennsylvania State University. They provided extensive information on their educational and employment backgrounds. They revealed their career goals and aspirations and the processes, formal and informal, that led to their administrative positions in two-year colleges. These administrators helped build one of the largest, most comprehensive data bases available on two-year, upper-level college administrators.

In the 1960s and early 1970s, two-year colleges grew rapidly. New multicampus districts, the forces of collective bargaining, and increased state-level coordination mandated changes in administration. Recent economic conditions and increasing concern among students and faculty for their future careers present additional implications for two-year institutions. How have these changes and concerns affected administrators? Are traditional career paths changing? Are today's administrators satisfied with their current positions? What is the emerging profile of the two-year college administrator of the 1980s?

From the data provided by this study, an accurate, comprehensive picture of administrators' careers and concerns can be developed. This information can help to preserve the mission and vitality of two-year colleges nationwide.

Sponsorship
In addition to the cooperation of the American Association of Community and Junior Colleges, the study has benefited from assistance of the *Teachers Insurance Annuity Association*. Funding was provided by the *Ford Foundation*, the *Exxon Educational Foundation*, and *The Pennsylvania State University*.

Who Are Today's Administrators?

PROFESSIONAL BACKGROUND

The sample for Today's Academic Leaders was drawn from eight top-line administrative positions. These include presidents (193), chief executives (116), chief academic officers (271), librarians — including directors of learning resources (209), chief business officers (207), chief student life officers (221), directors of financial aid (160), and directors of continuing education (135). The majority (90.8 percent) of respondents are currently working in public two-year institutions.

In order to analyze accurately the career paths of administrators, we asked respondents to list all paid professional positions they had held, beginning with their current position. They were also asked to name each institution of employment and the dates during which they held each position. These comprehensive vitae were also to include any part-time, jointly held, or acting positions.

The total number of professional positions held ranged from one to seventeen. In order to establish a workable data base, we limited our analysis to a maximum of ten positions per individual. The numbers of professional jobs held by most of the respondents fell within a range of three to seven as follows: There were 179 (11.8 percent) who listed seven positions, 212 (14 percent) who listed six positions, 246 (16.3 percent) who named five, 235 (15.5 percent) who mentioned four, and 162 (10.7 percent) who listed three paid positions.

Joint and Part-time Positions

Of the total sample of 1,512 senior administrators, 32.5 percent (491) had held at least one joint appointment; 11.0 percent (166) noted they had held at least one part-time professional position.

First Person to Hold Position

To take into account the creation of new positions and the establishment of new two-year institutions in recent decades, we asked respondents to indicate whether they had been the first person to occupy any of their paid positions. The results showed that 55.5 percent (831) had been the first person to hold a newly created position or a position in a new college.

Length of Time in Current Position

Most senior officials have held their current jobs for not more than five years. A total of 7.5 percent (113), for example, have held their current positions since 1980. Another 10.4 percent (157) began their present employment in 1981, with an additional 10.2 percent (154) occupying their current post since 1982. There are 215 administrators (14.2 percent) who began their jobs less than two years ago.

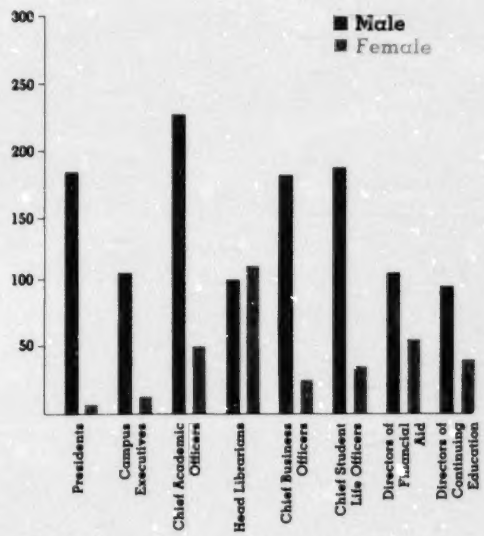
Current Position by Race

An overwhelming 90.5 percent of the respondents are white/Caucasian, 5.2 percent (78) are black/Negro, 1.9 percent (28) are Hispanic, and 2.1 percent (32) are of "other" racial or ethnic groups. The current positions containing the largest numbers of blacks include directors of financial aid (20) and chief student life officers (19). A total of 92.7 percent (179) of college presidents are white, 2.6 percent (5) are black, 1.6 percent (3) are Hispanic, and 2.1 percent (4) belong to an "other" group.

Current Position by Sex

When current position was analyzed by the respondents' sex, we found that the three administrative positions that employ the largest number of the 323 females in the sample are head librarians (110), directors of financial aid (55), and academic deans (43). There are six female presidents in the sample.

ADMINISTRATORS BY SEX



PERSONAL BACKGROUND

Age

The years of birth given by our sample of administrators ranged from 1911 to 1960. Over one-third (565 or 37.4 percent) of the respondents were born between the years 1930 and 1940.

Place of Birth

Birthplaces included every state in the country, except Alaska, and many foreign countries. The heaviest concentrations are shown in the following table.

Top Six Birthplace States

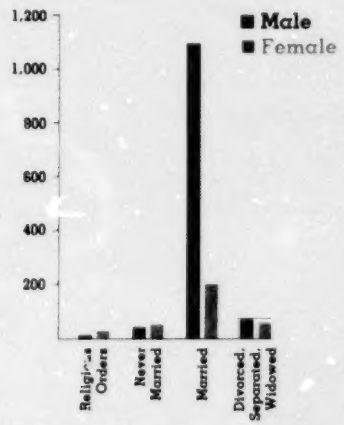
1. New York	7 percent
2. North Carolina	6 percent
3. Illinois	6 percent
4. Texas	6 percent
5. Pennsylvania	5 percent
6. California	5 percent

Marital Status

A majority of administrators (1,265 or 83.7 percent) are married and living with their spouses. Of the remaining executives, 6.0 percent (91) have never married, 6.5 percent (99) are divorced, 1.3 percent (20) are separated, 1.3 percent (19) are members of religious orders, and 1.1 percent (17) are widowed.

There are distinct differences in marital status between men and women. A clear majority of male administrators are married and living with their mates (1,070 or 90.0 percent), while only 60.7 percent (196) of the female respondents are married. A greater percentage of women than men are single and have never been married (48 or 14.9 percent). Only 3.6 percent of male officials have never been married. A higher percentage of women than men are divorced or separated.

MARITAL STATUS BY SEX



Spouse's Occupation

The largest occupational category for spouses (29.5 percent) was homemaker. The next largest percentage (7.0 percent) listed jobs in education.

Number of Children

A total of 34.3 percent of administrators (519) said they have two children. An additional 21.2 percent (320) have three children, and 8.4 percent (127) indicated they did not have any children. The range was zero to eleven.

PARENTAL BACKGROUND

Information about the parents of the respondents was sought in two questions concerning levels of formal education and occupations of both parents.

Levels of Education

Overall, mothers achieved a higher level of education than fathers; 31.0 percent (468) of mothers completed high school compared with 23.3 percent of fathers (352). A bachelor's degree was received by 8.7 percent (131) of the mothers, and 7.0 percent (106) of the fathers. But the mothers had less education at the graduate level, with 9.1 percent of the fathers receiving a graduate degree compared with only 3.6 percent of the mothers.

Parental Occupations

The second question asked respondents to state, as specifically as possible, the occupations of each parent when the administrator was sixteen years old. The occupations of the fathers were very diverse. However, most of the jobs could be included under the heading of blue collar or service occupations, with 32.1 percent (486) employed in this category. Farmers composed the second largest occupational area, with 13 percent (192). An additional 10 percent (145) were self-employed, and 7 percent (110) were categorized as first-level managers.

The majority of the mothers (62.7 percent) were homemakers. The next most common types of employment were education positions (3 percent) and domestic service/waitress (3 percent).

EDUCATIONAL BACKGROUND

Number of Degrees

As one means of describing the career paths of administrators, we asked respondents to list their earned degrees. There were spaces for associate, bachelor's, master's, doctoral, and other post-doctoral degrees, such as master of law, other medical degrees, divinity degrees, and certain specialist certificates and diplomas. The largest group of administrators (46.6 percent) listed three earned degrees, with the usual pattern being one bachelor's degree, one master's degree, and one doctorate. Two degrees had been obtained by 32.4 percent, and 7.3 percent had one degree. One hundred sixty-eight people (10.9 percent) listed four degrees, nineteen had completed five, and two administrators said they had earned six degrees.

In addition to reporting the number of earned degrees, respondents listed the names of the institutions from which they had received degrees, the dates upon which the programs had been completed, and the primary fields in which the degrees had been awarded. These are described below.

Associate Degrees

A total of 14.4 percent (217) of respondents earned an associate degree. Those degrees were most often awarded in the following areas: humanities (29.0 percent), business (13.8 percent), education (11.1 percent), and secretarial/technical (9.7 percent).

The locations of the institutions in which associate degrees were completed were well scattered across the country, with the largest concentration in the South, notably Florida, Georgia, Mississippi, and Texas. The greatest percentage of associate degrees (83.4 percent) were obtained from colleges classified as two-year institutions.

Bachelor's Degrees

Of the 1,466 people (97.0 percent) who had earned a bachelor's degree, the top four fields of study were business administration (10.8 percent), English and English literature (9.7 percent), history (9.2 percent), and secondary education (8.3 percent).

Master's Degrees

Approximately 90.0 percent of current administrators earned master's degrees. The three most often-studied fields can be grouped under the general heading of education. The greatest number (15.1 percent) specialized in guidance and counseling, followed by educational administration (15.0 percent), and educational psychology or curriculum (11.1 percent). The master of business administration degree was awarded to 4.9 percent.

Doctoral Degrees

First doctoral degrees were earned by 44.6 percent (675) of the sample. The predominate number of degrees was conferred in the general area of education, of which the most popular specialty was higher education administration (35.3 percent). The second area was educational administration with 23.0 percent.

The two types of degrees most often earned were doctor of education (Ed.D., 47.0 percent) and doctor of philosophy (Ph.D., 37.5 percent). There were 105 (7.0 percent) respondents who listed "other" earned degrees, certificates, or diplomas.

Top Institutions Where Degrees Were Earned

The six institutions from which the greatest number of administrators earned their first bachelor's degree follow:

Top Bachelor's Institutions

Institution	Number
1. East Carolina University	18
2. Michigan State University	15
3. Appalachian State University	13
4. Florida State University	12
5. University of Utah	12
6. University of Maryland	12

Universities from which members of our sample most often received their first master's degree include:

Top Master's Institutions

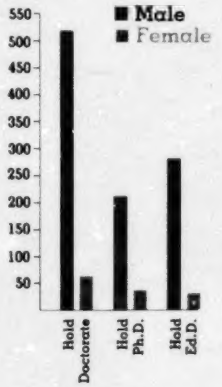
Institution	Number
1. Appalachian State University	24
2. University of Illinois, Urbana	23
3. University of Minnesota	21
4. University of Michigan	20
5. Michigan State University	19
6. University of Wisconsin	19

The most commonly named institutions that granted a first doctoral degree are:

Top Doctoral Institutions

Institution	Number
1. Nova University	24
2. Michigan State University	23
3. University of Florida	17
4. University of Southern California	17
5. Florida State University	16
6. North Carolina State University	16

DOCTORAL DEGREE BY SEX



Career Advancement Issues

WHAT EXTERNAL/INTERNAL PROFESSIONAL ACTIVITIES ARE IMPORTANT?

Respondents were asked to consider a list of ten external activities that are often believed to contribute to career advancement and to indicate whether any had been important for their professional advancement. The following figures are based on the total number of responses for each activity.

The highest level of participation involved 606 administrators (40.1 percent) who served on a board of directors of a state or regional professional organization. The second most popular activity was paid external consultant (28.1 percent).

From a list of six internal professional activities often provided by higher education institutions, respondents most often participated in special institutional task forces, committees, and commissions (1,185 or 78.4 percent). The second most popular choice was the opportunity to take on additional responsibilities over and above specific job descriptions; here a total of 76.1 percent (1,150) of current administrators noted the importance of these extra responsibilities to career advancement.

DO COMMUNITY ACTIVITIES AID ADVANCEMENT?

A majority of respondents (57.6 percent) said that participation in organized community activities had been important to their career advancement.

From a list of nine possible types of community activities, the highest percentages of participation were in the following areas: local school(s) (37.5 percent), civic and fraternal groups (36.2 percent), economic development and business organizations (34.0 percent), philanthropic and cultural activities (31.9 percent), and church and religious groups (31.4 percent).

ARE MENTORS IMPORTANT?

Respondents were asked if they felt they had sustained any long-term, professionally centered relationships with more experienced individuals who may have guided, advised, and assisted them in the early stages of their careers. The results showed that 50.1 percent (758) had experienced at least one such relationship.

There were 114 female respondents (35.3 percent) and 307 male respondents (25.8 percent) who said that a mentor had assisted them in obtaining their current position. An overwhelming majority of both men and women said their mentor(s) had been male.

Career Mobility Issues

HOW DID ADMINISTRATORS OBTAIN CURRENT JOBS?

We asked respondents to tell us how they became candidates for their current positions. A total of 45.4 percent (687) of administrators said they became a candidate by applying directly for their current position. The majority of respondents (60.5 percent) did not actively search for a job before accepting their current position. The greatest number of administrators (563 or 37.2 percent) said personal contacts were the best source for finding out about their present job. Another 20 percent had responded to the institution's job announcement.

There were 255 (16.9 percent) individuals who told us they had participated as a candidate in at least one search in the last five years that they felt was unfair, highly irregular, or fraudulent.

REASONS FOR MOVING TO PRESENT INSTITUTION

As one step in tracing the career paths of leading administrators, we asked respondents to rate the importance of the reasons they had for moving to the institution in which they now work. We developed a series of fourteen factors and asked administrators to show what importance each had by marking no, low, moderate, high, or very high importance.

Duties and Responsibilities

The factor of greatest importance in selecting their current institution was the duties and responsibilities of the position, with 54.0 percent (817) rating this category very high. One other important condition for taking the current job was that the individual was "ready for a change," with 592 (39.2 percent) giving this reason a very high rating.

Geographic Location

Next in importance for moving to a particular institution was its geographic location. A high importance rating was marked by 375 respondents (24.8 percent), and 404 (26.7 percent) answered "very high" in importance.

Other

Approximately 48.2 percent (729) of the respondents said perquisites were of low importance in choosing their current place of employment. Over one-half of the total sample (774 or 51.2 percent) said employment opportunities for their spouse were of no importance in their decision to move to the institutions in which they now work.

REASONS FOR REMAINING AT PRESENT INSTITUTION

Recognizing that there may be different reasons for remaining at an institution from those for selecting it in the first place, we compiled a list of fifteen possible reasons. The same format for answering was followed as for the previous question. In most categories the importance rating for remaining at the institution was consistent with the rating given for originally selecting the institution. In only the following two areas were there significant changes in evaluation.

The factor of institutional reputation became important, with 29.9 percent (452) of the sample marking "high importance" and an additional 22.8 percent (345) of respondents stating that this factor was of very high importance in their decision to remain. Administrators felt that salary was more important in keeping them at their current place of work than it had been for moving to the institution. One-third of the respondents (33.2 percent) rated this category of high importance and another 23.0 percent marked "very high."

ARE ADMINISTRATORS CONSIDERING A JOB CHANGE?

A total of 17.5 percent (265) of respondents answered "yes" they are seriously considering a job change, and 19.2 percent said they are "maybe" interested in a job change.

Position Preference

Of those who are considering a job change, responses were fairly evenly divided among choices of position. Nearly one-third (30.2 percent) favored a similar position, another 33.2 percent are seeking a new position at a higher level, and 30.0 percent prefer a new position in a new administrative area.

Institutional Preference

Nearly one-half (47.4 percent) would select another two-year college as their new institution of employment rather than their current institution, a four-year college or university, a higher education agency, or an institution outside of higher education.

City Preference

The largest percentage of respondents (13.8 percent) want their new job to be located in a medium-sized city (50,000 to 500,000 people).

WOULD YOU DO IT AGAIN?

We asked respondents to tell us if they would choose to be an administrator if they could start over. A substantial majority of 76.1 percent responded "yes." Only 7.4 percent replied "no," and an additional 15.7 percent said "maybe."

When asked to explain their choice, a substantial number of those who wrote comments (41.8 percent or 396) said they enjoyed their work; they were good at their jobs, and found the work challenging. As one senior administrator said, "I love being an administrator. Being with students and faculty satisfies me immensely. I relish being a part of a solution to problems."

Another respondent told us, "I have been blessed by a challenging situation, a cooperative Board of Trustees, and a lovely, warm community."

Another 23.1 percent (219) of the respondents said they would have prepared differently by acquiring higher or different degrees, skills, or training.

One administrator wrote, "I would have attended an institution better prepared to teach/prepare me for community college work."

Several respondents wished they had begun their careers earlier in life: "I would have started earlier — and taken daily, large doses of self-confidence."

Future Concerns

We asked respondents to share their opinions concerning selected *external* activities and *internal* issues that they felt their institutions should address in the next five years. From a list of fifteen external activities, nearly equal percentages of respondents indicated that state financial support for programs and teaching (60.4 percent) and linkages with business and industry (60.0 percent) rated very high at their institutions. Nearly one-half (48.9 percent) of current administrators noted that the preservation of institutional mission should be a very high concern in the next few years.

Five of the fifteen internal issues offered were perceived by a majority of respondents to be important areas of future concern for their current institutions. Quality of instruction was rated of "very high" importance by 65.3 percent (988) of the sample. The second most important issue was student retention, with 63.0 percent (952) of administrators giving this issue a "very high" importance rating. A majority of respondents felt that very high importance should be placed on student recruitment and marketing (56.7 percent), fiscal management and resource allocation (54.6 percent), and long-range planning (50.0 percent).

THE PENN STATE RESEARCH TEAM

Today's Academic Leaders Project has been a team effort. From the preparation of draft questionnaires to the final analyses and dissemination efforts, many individuals have been involved. We'd like you to meet the members of the research team.

Kathryn M. Moore, project director, is professor of education and research associate at the Center for the Study of Higher Education at Penn State. She has been on the faculty since the summer of 1977. Before coming to Pennsylvania, Dr. Moore was on the faculty at Cornell University. She holds a Ph.D. from the University of Wisconsin in Education Policy Studies. Her recent research and teaching interests are administrator development, college students, and academic women.

S. V. Martorana, project codirector, is research associate at the Center for the Study of Higher Education and professor of higher education in the College of Education at Penn State. Dr. Martorana has an M.A. and Ph.D. from the University of Chicago. Previously he served in a number of administrative and policy-making capacities in several colleges and universities as well as in state and federal agencies, particularly in the areas of community colleges and statewide planning and coordination. He has published numerous books, monographs, and articles in these areas.

Susan Twombly, project assistant, is a doctoral candidate in the higher education program at Penn State and a research assistant in the Center for the Study of Higher Education. Before coming to Penn State, she was associate dean of students at Juniata College. Her interests include labor market analysis, administrator career development, and long-distance crutch hopping.

Cynthia Jones was responsible for much of the coding and preliminary preparation of textual materials. She holds a B.A. in English from Dickinson College. She claims she never wants to see a code sheet again.

Kim Zaugg, research assistant at the Center for the Study of Higher Education, provided computer-programming expertise. She is currently working toward a doctoral degree in higher education.

Christine Irvin, multilingual harpist and secretary, is wanted in four states for harassing respondents.

Kathy Harford and RoseMary Witham were diligent, clear-eyed coders.

Sally Kelley, mistress of the word-processing keyboard, brought order out of chaos.

Advice provided by our panel of experts was crucial to the preparation of the survey instrument and to the various aspects of information dissemination. Although we appreciate their expertise, they are in no way responsible for the contents reported herein or elsewhere: Dr. Mary M. Norman, president, Orange County Community College; Dr. Reginald Wilson, director, Office of Minority Concerns at the American Council on Education; Dr. Mildred Bulpitt, Rio Salado College; and Dr. Estela Bensimon, Los Angeles Center for the Study of Community Colleges.

SAMPLING METHODS

A standardized questionnaire containing thirty-one questions was developed at the Center for the Study of Higher Education and sent to a stratified random sample of line administrators in accredited two-year public and private institutions. The sample consisted of approximately 35 percent, or 2,050 administrators, from a total population of 5,862 administrators and 1,219 institutions drawn from the 1984 *Higher Education Directory*. In addition, the sample was stratified by position type among selected administrative positions. The sample includes presidents (193), campus executives (116), chief academic officers (271), librarians, including directors of learning resources (209), chief business officers (207), chief student life officers (221), directors of financial aid (160), and directors of continuing education (135).

A three-stage mail-out and follow-up procedure was initiated in March 1984 and culminated in May 1984. The initial mailing of the questionnaire and letter of explanation in March was followed by a reminder postcard two weeks later. A second questionnaire was mailed during the first week of April along with a letter stressing the importance of a high response rate in order to compile an accurate profile of leading administrators nationwide. A response rate of 77.8 percent was achieved by the end of June 1984. Completed questionnaires were coded and processed at the Center for the Study of Higher Education.

A principal reason for surveying such a large sample was to provide a meaningful and accurate base upon which future studies of the structures of administrators' careers could be judged. The size of the sample also was determined to ensure the inclusion of a workable number of women and minorities. As a result of the scope of the sample and the high response rate, generalization of the information to the larger population appears justified, as well as analysis of the data by subcategories.

THANK YOU

This study would not have been possible without the willingness of over 1,500 busy administrators to fill out and return the nine-page questionnaire. More than 77 percent of those receiving the survey returned usable forms. Details of the sampling appear above.

This publication is being made available to higher education administrators and others across the country. If you want additional copies, please contact the Today's Academic Leaders Project at the Center for the Study of Higher Education, 325 Pond Lab, The Pennsylvania State University, University Park, PA 16802.

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